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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HALIFAX 000070

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [CMGT](#) [CVIS](#) [CASC](#) [KFRD](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: HALIFAX ANNUAL CERTIFICATION OF CONSULAR MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

REF: STATE 114455

1. In accordance with reftel, Halifax conducted its annual review of consular management controls on November 10, 2008. Harold D. Foster, FS-01, Consul General certifies successful completion of the management review and that post is in full compliance.

2.

a. Standard Operating Procedures: I have reviewed and confirm that the consular officer is familiar with and has access to the basic references and instructions including 7 and 9 FAM, 7 FAH-1, the Consular Management Handbook, CA's SOP cables, and CAWeb (both the unclassified and classified sites). No one is using training materials as a reference in place of the reference materials listed above.

b. Consular Shared Tables (CST) Management: I have reviewed and confirm that: (1) only consular section employees have consular roles and that adjudicatory and management roles are limited to American consular officers; (2) all active users are in fact at post with a need to access the system and their particular role(s), and that users who no longer have a need for access have been switched to inactive status, and that any test or anonymous accounts have been deactivated; (3) users are authorized system access only at the appropriate level; and, (4) user passwords have been periodically reset (at a minimum every six months) and are randomly chosen by the individual so that no one else, including the system and CST administrators, knows the individual's password.

c. Physical Access: I confirm that physical access to the working areas of the consular section, and to consular computers and workstations in particular, are controlled and, in general, limited only to consular section employees and those whose responsibilities allow access. FSN personnel are not present outside of office hours without a cleared American and controlled items are secured if an American consular officer is not present. Consulate General Halifax is located in a small office suite. The office's open floor-plan design does not allow for doors and restricted access to the consular section. Non-consular employees must frequently pass through the section, but they do not work or linger in the section. Access to the section is particularly limited during visa interviewing hours. The Consular Section Chief has line of sight control over the entire consular section from her workspace.

d. Access to Personally Identifiable Information (PII): I confirm that procedures are in place to assure that the collection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII), such as date and place of birth and social security numbers, is kept to a minimum and such information is appropriately protected. I confirm that access to consular systems containing such information, including PIERS, IV, NIV and ACS, is restricted to those with a legitimate need to see such information and that records are only accessed in connection with official duties. I confirm that there have been no breaches or incidents involving loss, theft, unauthorized access or compromise of PII at this

post, but that such incidents would be reported as described in Department Notice 2008-06-134 of June 25, 2008.

e. Inventory Count and Reconciliation of Accountable Consular Items: The Consular Section Chief Elizabeth Schwefler(ACO), together with the Consul General Harold Foster (backup ACO), has performed a comprehensive physical inventory of accountable consular supplies (passports, passport foils, CBRAs, Visa Foils and non-expendable items such as seals and stamps) and documented the results of that inventory in the Accountable Items (AI) module for visa foils, CBRAs, passport books and passport foils, and for all other accountable items in a memo for the files. I certify that the physical inventory reconciles with inventory records, and that there are no discrepancies.

f. Control and Reconciliation of Accountable Items: I confirm that internal section procedures are in place, that accountable consular supplies are controlled, handled, destroyed, and accounted for in accordance with 7 FAH-1 H-600. AI is being used for reconciling daily usage of all accountable consular supplies including passports, CBRAs, and NIV foils. Post has had no instances of missing controlled items in the past 12 months.

g. Destruction Log: I have reviewed and confirm that post is properly destroying (or returning to the Department for destruction) spoiled or unusable or obsolete controlled items (passport books, CBRAs, visa foils) and recording their witnessed destruction in AI.

h. Cash Accountability: I have reviewed and confirm that the ACO, Consular Cashier, and alternates have been formally designated using the model letters found under tools on the Consular Fees page on CAWeb and are fully familiar with the instructions in Consular Management Handbook chapter 7 FAH-1

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H-700. The ACO has completed Consular Management at a Small Post at FSI, which included ACO responsibilities. She will enroll in the online course PC 417 for refresher training. The Consular Cashier and alternates will complete PC 419 as soon as it is available online. I confirm that accounting and reconciliation procedures for consular fees, including MRV fees, are properly carried out. The ACRS End of Day report and Daily Accounting Sheet (Exhibit 7-5 in CMH 700) is completed daily. At the end of the month the Daily Accounting Sheet is forwarded to the post's FMO for verification against FSC's record of OF-158 receipts, and signed by both the ACO (Consul) and FMO (Consul General). The Daily Accounting Sheet for the past twelve months is on file in the ACO's records. In the past 12 months, there have been no discrepancies at this post.

i. Periodic Comparison of MRV Fees and NIV Applications: I have reviewed and confirm that the periodic comparison of MRV fees and NIV applications is carried out as prescribed in 7 FAH-1 H-744, H-752 e and f, and under tools on the Consular Fee page on CAWeb. All NIV Application fees are paid at an off-site location. Data on fees collected and applications received are also forwarded monthly to Ottawa for Mission-wide reconciliation. Cancelled receipts are filed with the DS-156 for reconciliation.

j. Referral System: I have reviewed and confirm that post visa referral procedures are in compliance with 9 FAM Appendix K and 06 State 180489. Post follows Mission referral policy and procedures that are documented in writing and issued to post on the authority of the Ambassador. All referrals are signed by agency and section heads as appropriate, referral information is captured in the NIV system, referral forms are scanned into the NIV system, and consular managers periodically review referral reports to identify trends and possible areas of concern. Briefings are required before officers can submit referrals. No visa referrals were done in Halifax in the past 12 months. Referrals from within the consular section would be handled and documented identically to those from outside the section.

k. Training: I have reviewed and confirm that American and

locally employed staff are adequately trained for their responsibilities, including awareness of fraud in applications for visas and other benefits. Newcomers to the consular section are trained in accordance with SOP 73. The ACO has completed the on-line user training for ACRS.

l. Standards of Employee Conduct: I have reviewed and confirm that all consular employees, American and FSN, are familiar with the standards of ethical conduct expected of them. The consular officer has reviewed the Department's Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, and we have discussed the applicability of these ethical standards in the consular context. I have reviewed post operations with all personnel to determine that there are no influences being brought to bear on the visa or passport process that would lead to any perception of impropriety. Post follows the Mission's written gift policy consistent with Department standards. Consular officers must follow the same procedures as all other Mission employees when advocating on behalf of an applicant. A consular officer who is personally acquainted with an applicant must recuse himself or herself from adjudicating that person's visa application to the extent possible at a two-officer post.

m. Namecheck and Clearance Reviews: I have reviewed and confirm that all namecheck returns are given a rigorous review and that consistent standards are applied in determining when a hit is close enough to warrant further action. I confirm that when insufficient information is present to rule out a potential match to a namecheck hit, that hit is treated as if it were a match.

n. Visa Lookout Accountability (VLA): I have reviewed and confirm that VLA procedures are in place and that VLA certification is up to date. All issuing officers at post fully understand VLA provisions and requirements, as well as the consequences for failing to comply with VLA procedures and supervisors spot check issuances to verify that VLA requirements were met by reviewing any with CAT I hits.

o. Intake, Interview and Screening: I have reviewed visa intake, interview, and document review procedures and confirm that post is in full compliance with the Department's instruction (9 FAM 41.102 and 41.103 procedural notes and other guidance). I have reviewed and confirm that screening of applications by locally employed staff does not encroach on adjudication. Screening is only for completeness of application and does not extend to asking questions or making notes on the application that could be interpreted as influencing adjudication. LES employees do not turn away NIV applicants who have paid the appropriate fees and have a completed application, even if they think additional documents will be required. Such cases are adjudicated by an officer and denied under 221g if

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appropriate.

p. Oversight of Processing: I have reviewed and confirm that adequate supervision of processing is exercised by American officers. The Consular Section Chief has line of sight supervision of the print station.

q. Biometrics: I have reviewed and confirm that fingerprinting for biometric purposes is collected by LE staff and verified by an American Officer, and that post is in compliance with Bio/Visa Enrollment policy and procedures (05 State 191641) regarding waivers.

r. Interview and Adjudication: I have reviewed and confirm that all visa applicants for whom a personal appearance is required per 05 State 0092176 and 9 FAM 41.102 are being interviewed.

s. Photo Standards: I have reviewed 9 FAM 41.113 procedural notes and the photo guide on www.travel.state.gov and confirm that post is only entering recent photos of the applicant and is rigorously applying standards for NIV and passport photos.

t. Review of Visa Refusals and Issuances: I have ensured that NIV refusals and issuances are being reviewed using the approved electronic NIV review system (in CCD). The CG reviews the Consul's refusals and issuances daily in accordance with 07 State 076951, 9 FAM 41.113 (1) and PN18.1 and.2; and 9 FAM 41.121 and PN1.2-8 and .2-9. There have been no supervisory overcomes in the past 12 months.

u. Visa Shopping: I have reviewed post procedures to ensure there are practices in place that discourage visa shopping. Virtually all visa applicants in Halifax are TCNs. Post does not maintain any sort of NIV written re-application process.

v. Files: I have reviewed and confirm that consular files are being retained in accordance with the Record Disposition Schedule and that visa files in particular are being retained per instructions in 9 FAM Appendix F. I confirm that all consular personnel understand that visa records are to be safeguarded in accordance with INA Section 222(f), to prevent unauthorized disclosure in any form, including via the internet or other public media. I confirm that NIV records are being filed chronologically per instructions in SOP 8 (03 State 70558).

w. Passports and CRBAs: I have reviewed and confirm that post procedures and controls are in place to ensure the accuracy and integrity of U.S. passports, CRBAS, and other nationality determinations. Post conducts passport name checks for all passport services, including adding visa pages. Consular managers continue to audit passport cases adjudicated at post. In particular, procedures are in place to ensure accurate annotation of citizenship and identity documentation; annotation related to name clearances, endorsements and limitations; clarification of illegible entries and correction of inaccuracies; and fraud detection.

x. Fraud Prevention Programs: I have reviewed and confirm that appropriate management controls are in effect for the fraud prevention program. The sole consular officer has been designated and trained as Fraud Prevention Manager. There are procedures to safeguard the role of the FSN investigator by prohibiting her from influencing decisions on eligibility. Halifax has never conducted a fraud prevention field trip.

y. Classified Access: I confirm that the consular officer has access to classified systems and that she checks classified e-mail at least once a week. The limited amount of classified traffic handled by post makes it impractical to open the vault to check e-mail on a daily basis.

z. Consular Agents: Halifax does not supervise any consular agents.

13. Halifax is a two-officer post. The Consul fills all of the primary consular management roles and the Consul General serves as supervisor and/or backup.

FOSTER